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COMMUNIST INFLUENCE IN BURMA

WORKING PAPER

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D/FE Staff Study
23 August 1949

COMMUNIST INFLUENCE IN BURMA

SUMMARY

Communism has only recently become an important factor in Burmese politics. For a short period after the end of the war Communists dominated the most influential political organization in Burma. They were outmaneuvered, however, by non-communist elements, split into two factions and eliminated from the government. Nevertheless, the relatively few Communists have retained considerable popular support and, because of the widespread acceptance of Marxist theory in contemporary Burmese politics, have been able to exert an influence far out of proportion to their actual numbers.

Both Communist Parties are now in armed rebellion against the Burmese Government. The Burma Communist Party (BCP), the larger and more influential, has shown increasing conformity to the Moscow line, and has obviously been strongly influenced by Chinese Communist policies. Communist elements have contributed heavily to the prevailing political and economic instability in Burma. They have taken advantage of the instability to extend their influence and to seek new allies in order to develop a popular front through which to achieve their ultimate objective--undisputed political control of Burma. The BCP is known to have maintained extensive liaison with the Communist Party of India, and is suspected of being in contact with Chinese and Indochinese Communists. No direct contact with the Soviets, except at a few international gatherings, is known.

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Burmese Government countermeasures against the Communists have not yet been successful. Although the Government possesses superior manpower and material resources, it is not likely to suppress effectively the Communist insurrection in the near future and prolonged guerrilla warfare is likely. On the other hand, the Communists appear to be incapable of overthrowing the Government in the immediate future without considerable outside assistance. The utilization of Western assistance by the Burmese government, which might give it the necessary strength to establish itself as the genuine advocate of nationalism and improved conditions in Burma and at the same time identify the Communists as proponents of violence acting under foreign instruction, is a complex and delicate problem. Moreover, the speed at which adverse events are taking place in China leaves little time in Burma for developments favorable to the West.

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COMMUNIST INFLUENCE IN BURMA

Introduction

Communism is a relatively recent phenomenon in Burma. Although a small group of Burmese, mostly university students, were inspired by communist literature and participated in sporadic communistic activities during the mid-thirties, there was no formally organized Communist Party until 1944. The development of a cohesive Communist movement began to evolve in 1942 when all Communist-inclined Burmese united in common opposition to the Japanese and advocated unqualified support of the Allies. Because they were instrumental in organizing and directing the Burmese resistance to the Japanese, the Communists emerged from the war with their prestige and popularity tremendously enhanced.

In August 1944, the Communists were primarily responsible for the amalgamation of various elements of the resistance into the Anti-Fascist Peoples' Freedom League (AFPFL), the only effective political force in Burma at the war's end. Communists-held key positions in the AFPFL and the Burma Communist Party (BCP) constituted its largest and best organized component. The Communists undertook a strenuous effort to gain complete control of the AFPFL and to this end conducted an intense campaign to strengthen the party and broaden its popular base. Until early 1946, the BCP was able to dominate the AFPFL, but it never achieved complete control. Gradually, its drive for power aroused anti-Communist sentiment within the AFPFL and led to the formation of a non-Communist coalition which, with considerable adroitness, split the BCP and forced the with-

drawal from the League of both factions. The two Communist groups thereupon became the first effectively organized opposition to the AFPFL. The Communist Party (Burma), (CPB), popularly called Red Flags, was organized in March 1946 and commenced a campaign of violence almost from the date of its birth. The Burma Communist Party (BCP) faction, which retained the title, is the more important and influential of the two Communist parties despite a sizeable loss of membership. Although the BCP also instigated unrest after its expulsion from the AFPFL in November 1946, it temporarily avoided overt violence. Rather, the BCP sought a rapprochement with the AFPFL and might have succeeded had it not insisted upon the unconditional acceptance of its terms.

In February 1948, acting on orders believed to have originated with the Soviet Ambassador in New Delhi and transmitted by the Communist Party of India, the BCP radically altered its policies and embarked upon a program of extreme agitation directed against the AFPFL and the Government it sponsored. The Communist press immediately commenced a campaign of abuse and vilification, BCP leaders openly advocated overthrowing the Government, a series of strikes developed, and there were strong indications that the BCP planned to establish parallel administrations in the areas of central Burma which it dominated. On 28 March, the Government finally took action by forcefully breaking the strikes and arresting as many Communists as possible. However, all important BCP leaders escaped and a full-fledged Communist insurrection soon commenced under their direction.

Sources of Communist Strength

The causes underlying the birth and growth of Communism in Burma not difficult to ascertain. More than a hundred years of foreign rule

created a number of circumstances highly favorable to Communist exploitation. Chief among these was the natural, and nearly universal Burmese resentment of foreign domination. Furthermore, while the British colonial administration was, in many respects, highly enlightened and beneficial to Burma, it was far from a blessing. Under a policy of laissez faire and the impersonal rule of law the old Burmese social order collapsed and was not adequately replaced by Western institutions. Agrarian indebtedness, dispossession and general economic distress became widespread, and control of the country's entire economic life passed increasingly into foreign hands. Another unfortunate aspect of British rule was a military policy of excluding Burmans from the armed forces while recruiting among the Karen, Chin and Kachin minorities who, along with imported Indian troops, were used to maintain order. In all, the general disorganization of Burmese society, economic hardship and the inability of Burmese to participate in the development and defense of their country led to the development of a spirit of intense nationalism and to a wide acceptance of Marxism, including the Stalinist variety.

Communism in Burma made considerable popular headway during and after the last war. The Communists' initiative in organizing the resistance movement and the AFPFL permitted them to capitalize upon the popularity of Communist resistance leaders and to identify Communism with nationalism. In terms of finances, organization and a defined party program, the Communists held and utilized a tremendous advantage over other political groups. Meanwhile, the serious dislocations caused by three and a half years of war served to enhance the appeal of easy Communist promises and simple solutions of Burmese grievances. In addition,

the Communists have been able to utilize the extremely individualistic Burman native, the general distrust of and resistance to Governmental authority and endemic lawlessness for their own purposes. They have also been able to exploit the admiration of many young Burmese for Soviet economic and military accomplishments. The Communists have struck responsive chords by criticizing the numerous glaring weaknesses and shortcomings of the AFPFL and the Burmese Government and have profited by some of the Government's anti-Communist measures which have injured the innocent as well as the guilty. Finally, the March 1948 rebellion led by a large part of the Communist-inclined Peoples' Volunteer Organization (PVO), one of the two major components of the AFPFL after the Communists had been expelled, and the January 1949 revolt of the Karens, the largest ethnic minority group in Burma, have provided the Communists with new opportunities to extend their influence. Not only do these disaffections further contribute to instability in Burma, but they pave the way for the Communists, who were once fairly well isolated, to seek new allies to augment their own efforts for the overthrow of the existing regime.

THE BURMA COMMUNIST PARTY

Organization

The organization of the BCP appears to be similar to that of other Communist parties throughout the world. The familiar system of "democratic centralization" of power has been adopted. Supreme authority is vested in a three-man Politburo theoretically elected and responsible to a Central Committee, which, in turn, is accountable to periodic Party Conferences. The last conference was held in February 1948 for the pur-

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pose of endorsing the Politburo's decision to implement the new revolutionary policy emanating from India. Below the national level, the Communists established upper and lower Burma commands over organizations supervised by District Secretary Generals and Central Committees. There is evidence that the Communist organization is further subdivided into township and village tract groups and that a separate unit, perhaps ranking with the district level, is maintained in Rangoon and possibly Mandalay. The smallest and basic unit is, of course, the cell.

Considerably less clear is the functional division within the BCP. There is a propaganda section whose activity has been curtailed and a women's section, known as the Womens' Congress. In addition, there is undoubtedly an organizational section charged with the recruitment of new party members, the promotion of front organizations, and the infiltration and exploitation of other groups and associations. Finally, there appears to be a military section the structure of which closely parallels BCP political frame work. In many cases the two are indistinguishable. The Politburo dictates military as well as political policy although implementation is unquestionably largely conducted by local commanders. The reported "supreme commander" of all Communist military forces is a member of the Central Committee to whom all District and Township Military Committees, which almost certainly also exercise political control in their respective areas, are responsible.

BCP organization has undoubtedly been adversely affected by the necessity of operating underground. The effectiveness of its chain of command undoubtedly varies from area to area and from group to group.

It is probably also hampered by personal rivalries and the independent tendencies of local leaders. Nevertheless, the BCP continues to function with a reasonable degree of efficiency and continues capable of maintaining pressure on the government and of expanding its activities whenever an opportunity is presented.

Leadership

The undisputed leader of the BCP is its Secretary General, Thakin Than Tun. Than Tun emerged as a Communist leader in the thirties, rose to prominence in the resistance movement and was Secretary General of the AFPFL until the Communists were expelled. Of all the Burmese Communists, Than Tun probably best understands Communist ideology and its applicability to Burma. While appearing to lack certain qualities of leadership, Than Tun has demonstrated a considerable capacity for organization and administration. As far as can be determined, he has steadfastly conformed to orthodox party principles and directives and has given no indication of "nationalist deviation." He appears to have the solid support of the Central Committee and, if recent publications in the Soviet press are any indication, his leadership has the sanction of the Kremlin and his party is recognized as the "official" Communist Party in Burma.

The only other BCP leader to attain substantial international prominence is H. N. Goshal, a Burma-born Indian. Goshal is well-indoctrinated and has had extensive experience as a Communist agitator in both the Indian and Burmese labor movements. After the war he became a member of the BCP's Politburo. He has served the party by proselytizing Indian laborers and cultivators, and by effecting liaison with the Communist

Party of India. It was Goshal who, while in India, ostensibly wrote and then delivered the document upon which the BCP based its revolutionary program. In late 1948, Goshal was reported to have clashed with Than Tun by advocating the abandonment of violence. Later, when severely censured by the Central Committee, he is supposed to have recanted. However, as a result, he may have lost his position on the Politburo and suffered a loss of prestige and influence in the party.

With a very few exceptions, other BCP functionaries are young men whose individual capabilities cannot be accurately assessed. Unlike Than Tun, it is doubtful that many of these have more than a superficial understanding of Communism and all its ramifications, especially its inherent danger to sovereignty. Although personal rivalries quite probably exist within the BCP, as evidenced by the occasional differences of opinion with which Than Tun has had to contend, they have not reached disruptive proportions. On the contrary, the BCP leaders seem to work with reasonable consonance, have kept the Communist machine functioning with a relatively high degree of discipline and efficiency, and have given no indication of digressing from their present course in the foreseeable future.

Strength

The exact numerical strength of the BCP cannot be accurately estimated because the lines separating Communists, actual and intimidated sympathizers and lawless bands operating under the cloak of Communism, are very indistinct. Rank and file party members are mostly opportunistic followers of local leaders, those who bear a grievance against the govern-

ment, or those who have succumbed to Communist propaganda which promises improvement of their standard of living. While several widely varying estimates of BCP strength have been attempted, none appears to have significant factual basis. Judging from the limited information available, actual membership of the BCP probably does not exceed a few thousand. The BCP's influence, however, is substantially greater than its numerical strength would indicate. It commands a considerable popular following (perhaps several hundred thousand) throughout a large part of Burma, especially in those rural areas of central and southern Burma where it has exercised more or less de facto control since the end of the war.

Distribution of Influence

Before the BCP commenced its insurrection, it maintained three major front groups designed to promote the cause of Communism among those elements considered most susceptible to Communist indoctrination, i.e., peasants, laborers, and youths. These organs were the All-Burma Peasants' Union which claimed 293,000 members, the All-Burma Trade Union Congress, an important component in Burma's small trade union movement, and the Peoples' Democratic Youth League (Red Guards) claiming a membership of 20,000 political enthusiasts. While membership figures were quite probably an exaggeration, these organizations were unquestionably of considerable importance and counted adherents scattered over two-thirds of Burma. Although they have since disintegrated, or at least gone underground, most of their members are presumed to retain strong pro-Communist sympathies and constitute the bulk of the Communists' present popular following.

The prevailing political atmosphere in Burma has provided Communists the opportunity to infiltrate and influence several prominent non-Communist organizations. Among these are the All-Burma Students' Union, the Rangoon University Students' Union, the All-Burma Muslim League and the All-Burma Ministerial Services Union, all of whom when combined, form a very significant force in Burmese politics. Furthermore, the Communists have been able to take advantage of pro-Communist tendencies in the FVO and to a lesser extent in military and police units where they have been able to promote some unrest and desertions.

Although genuine Communist publications have been suspended, their views still receive fairly wide dissemination. The BCP somehow continues to produce handbills and pamphlets which are circulated rather freely, even in Rangoon. In addition, some left-wing newspaper continue to carry party-line material, although refraining from severe criticism of the Government. In November 1948, a number of ultra-leftist journalists formed a semi-political organization known as the New Era Writers Association dedicated to the advancement of "new democracy." Its material, published without Governmental interference, is hardly distinguishable from that of the Communists. Finally, Communist literature, in both the English and Burmese languages, can be purchased at a "Peoples Literature House" in Rangoon, which is known to have been financed and established by the Communist Party of India with the cooperation of Goshal.

Since it went underground, the BCP appears to have made strenuous efforts to develop new front organizations. They have been reported as establishing "Democratic Fronts" in several districts, a "Peoples' New

Democratic Army," and strongly influencing a "New Democratic Front" in Rangoon led by extremist elements of the All-Burma Ministerial Services Union and the All-Burma Students Union. In March 1949, BCP succeeded the "Peoples' Democratic Front" (PDF), in forming a coalition with an undetermined number of PVO's and army mutineers who heretofore had been conducting their own separate rebellions. While the lasting qualities of this coalition have not been demonstrated and there is evidence of growing friction between its component elements, it is potentially the most serious threat to the restoration of stability in Burma, especially if it falls completely under BCP control. The PDF already dominates considerable territory and has a relatively large and well-armed military force at its disposal. It would appear to offer the BCP an ideal opportunity to develop a broad "popular front" movement without which it is highly unlikely that the Communists could achieve domination of Burma.

Geographically, the BCP controls several relatively small and scattered areas in the Irrawaddy and Sittang River valleys and throughout the Irrawaddy Delta area. It seems unlikely, however, that the BCP could control as much territory as it does if it were the only group in rebellion against the Government. The PDF and independent PVO groups control a solid bloc of territory along the Irrawaddy stretching from about 30 miles north of Rangoon to some 125 miles north of Mandalay as well as other substantial areas, including parts of Tenasserim in the south and the Shan and Kachin States in the east and north. Although all PDF and PVO-controlled territory should not be considered Communist-dominated, it is probable that they are susceptible to Communist penetration.

Military Activities

BCP military activities are conducted almost exclusively by small guerrilla bands operating on a hit-and-run basis in widely separated areas. These bands are well-supplied with an assortment of small calibre Japanese, British and American small arms. While the Communists have been able to capture numerous poorly defended towns and villages, they have been unable to hold a given position against determined Government attack and have consciously avoided engaging in pitched battles wherever possible. Although numerically and materially weaker than the Government forces, the Communists enjoy such advantages as favorable terrain, extreme maneuverability and capacity to fade into the local populace. Furthermore, they are opposed by forces both limited and inexperienced which must cope with other insurgents and which are capable of giving adequate and continuing protection only to selected centers of population. Consequently, the BCP has not been suppressed, or is it likely to be in the predictable future.

The ultimate objective of the BCP's military campaign is, of course, to wrest political power from any existing non-Communist regime. However, until such time as the BCP is able to develop a force capable of making successful frontal assault upon the Government, it must continue to resort to guerrilla tactics as the best means of undermining the Government's authority and aggravating national instability.

Military relations between the BCP and other insurgent groups are obscure, largely because of the difficulty often encountered in identifying the participants in any given engagement. Nevertheless, there are strong indications that on several occasions it has cooperated with

Government and PVO forces against the Karens. In other cases, however, it is reported to have avoided fighting the Karens and to have moved into areas cleared, but later evacuated, by the Karens. Despite Government allegations, there is very little evidence of premeditated cooperation between the BCP and the Karens. Clashes between BCP forces and Red Flag Communists have been frequent and there is reason to believe that the mutual animosity of the two Communist groups is bitter and deep-seated. Despite the formation of the PDF and Communist efforts to avoid antagonizing the PVO, there have been conflicts between the two and there are indications of growing friction within the framework of the PDF over the matters of spheres of influence and local leadership.

As long as the various rebel groups remain divided and mutually antagonistic, the Government may be able to hold its own militarily for some time to come. Nevertheless, Communist military activity contributes to the reduction of almost all Government revenues while at the same time forces steadily increased non-productive military expenditures and seriously hampers effective administration by creating widespread unrest. As a result, economic deterioration may be a greater threat to the Government than direct military action.

Plans and Policies

BCP policies, originally almost purely based on nationalism and identical to those of the AFPFL, have since become increasingly doctrinaire. Nevertheless, the primary source of friction between the BCP and the Socialist-dominated AFPFL may be traced to AFPFL efforts to attain independence and implement a Marxist program without resorting to violence,

rather than to any fundamental differences regarding the acceptability of Communism. As a result, the Anglo-Burmese Treaty, which includes important concessions to the UK in return for independence, has become the chief medium of BCP propaganda attacks upon the Burmese Government. For obligating Burma to honor foreign debts, to pay compensation for nationalized foreign property and to accept a British Military Mission, the BCP accuses the AFPFL's "right wing" of selling out to Anglo-American "capitalist-imperialists," accepting sham independence, completely betraying their "revolutionary" principles and becoming "fascists." In addition, steadily deteriorating conditions in Burma have forced the Government to seek relief by modifying its extreme leftist policies and seeking closer relations with the West, thus providing the BCP with further "proof" of its "reactionary" tendencies.

The most recent expression of BCP policies appears in the manifesto announcing the formation of the PDF, which, although signed by representatives of all participating elements, was undoubtedly written by the Communists. It presents a comprehensive politico-economic program which generally conforms to the internal "party line" and in many respects is strikingly similar to the policies of the Chinese Communist Party. Clearly, the first objective is the development of the PDF into an effective political and military organization under BCP leadership. The entire organization is to be managed "democratically" by a nine-man Executive Committee, representing the three components equally. Popular support is to be developed by district, township and village committees. Membership, however, is to be on individual basis; members cannot be anti-Communist and must faithfully adhere to all Executive directives. The

military forces are to retain their separate identity temporarily, but operations are to be directed by a Joint Supreme Council which is charged with the additional responsibility of forging a single "army."

The primary task of the PDF is to overthrow the present Government and replace it with a Peoples Democratic Republican State based upon a new "peoples' democratic" constitution, to eliminate local landlords, capitalists and "civil war criminals." To this end, the "agrarian revolution" is to be commenced in areas where circumstances are favorable, and those areas "liberated." "Public enemies" (Governmental officials) are to be made "prisoners of war," but those who cooperate may be entrusted with some administrative responsibilities. The new "peoples democratic" administration would then grant complete freedom of speech, assembly, writing and religion so long as these freedoms are not used as a political instrument. The new regime plans to nationalize monopolistic concerns and foreign trade and undertake a "broad" program of industrialization without the aid of Anglo-American "expansionists." Workers are promised such privileges as reduced hours, the right to strike and old age pensions while peasants are promised the abolition of indebtedness and usurious interest rates, as well as redistribution of land on the basis of family size and quality of the land.

In the field of foreign policy, the new Government will repudiate all foreign debts, expropriate all foreign capital, abrogate the Anglo-Burmese Treaty and any others "signed against the interest of the nation" and wage a continuous struggle against Anglo-American "expansionism," It will not accept assistance that would affect adversely Burma's political,

economic or military interests, but would be willing to establish friendly relations with any country on a "reciprocal and equal" basis. However, it will negotiate freely with other "Peoples' Democratic" States in the interest of "world peace."

Of interest also is the BCP's attitude towards the more conservative and backward ethnic minorities, particularly the Karens. The PDF manifesto states that, although the feudal systems of the hill people must be replaced with a "peoples" administration, these people are entitled to equal rights with all other peoples in Burma, including those of autonomy and cession. The Karen rebellion is attributed to imperialist machinations, the absence of "real" independence and "reactionary, landlord domination" of the Karen National Union. Therefore, the PDF is charged with "smashing" the Karen rebellion while the Karen "masses" are called upon to repudiate their leaders and join the Burman "masses" in order to shape their own destiny along "democratic" principles.

While BCP intentions for domination of Burma are clear, their realization has hardly progressed past the earliest stages. The conference at which the PDF was founded was marked by a considerable divergence of viewpoints. Bo Po Kun, the titular leader of the FVO who was later reported jailed by the PDF, favored reaching a settlement with the Government but was opposed by Than Tun. On the other hand, Than Tun opposed an accommodation with the Karens, while, at least, one other leader is reported to have advocated cooperation. The FVO subsequently is reported to have held a meeting of its own for the purpose of developing a unified policy and preventing further fragmentation of the organiza-

tion. Furthermore, there are indications of growing suspicion of the Communists within the PDF as well as the development of personal jealousies. Nevertheless, the BCP has succeeded, temporarily at least, in forming a popular front dominated by Than Tun and may now make efforts gradually to amalgamate those fragments still operating independently. Moreover, it is in a better position to remove the possibility of an effective rapprochement between the Government and the PVO. As a result, Communist capabilities in Burma have been appreciably enhanced and, unless undermined by internal dissension, stand a good chance of becoming even more formidable.

Foreign Contacts

The BCP is known to have been in contact with the Communist Party of India and probably still is. Although the channels of communications are not known, liaison is probably maintained through Indian Communists resident in Burma and those arriving by land, air or sea routes. On a few occasions, notably the 1945 Commonwealth Communist Conference in London and the conference sponsored by the World Federation of Democratic Youth in Calcutta in 1948, BCP representatives had the opportunity to meet Communist groups from several other countries, including the USSR. Although there is no conclusive evidence of direct liaison between the BCP and Chinese Communists, extensive liaison, relatively safe from detection, could exist and there are indications that it does. Such liaison is facilitated by the absence of adequate border security measures. The BCP's incorporation of significant portions of the Chinese program into its own has already been noted. Moreover, the man who is reported

to be the Secretary-General of the Burma branch of the China Democratic League is suspected of being a contact man between Burmese and Chinese Communists. He is said to have been on friendly terms with the president of the Peoples' Democratic Youth League and to have attended the Calcutta conference and, in the company of another Chinese, the BCP conference when it adopted the program of violence.

There have also been a few cases in which Chinese have been arrested under suspicious circumstances and may have been involved in liaison activity. Finally, the China News Agency has reported the signing, in Burma, of a mutual assistance agreement between the Chinese and Burmese Communist Parties. Although such an event appears highly improbable, it is by no means impossible.

No direct contacts with Soviets or the USSR have ever been proved, although recent unevaluated rumors emanating from Thailand charge the Soviet Legation there with purchasing arms and ammunition in the black market and smuggling them to the Burmese Communists. However, until more positive evidence is available, it should be assumed that BCP relations with the USSR are tenuous and indirect.

The extent of foreign control over the BCP is still an unresolved question. Strong foreign influence is discernable in its propaganda and in its growing compliance to orthodox Communist doctrine and use of violence. Although Than Tun has denied the charge of foreign control, he has publicly stated that "The peoples of the world's fight under the leadership of Soviet Russia is allied to the same struggle in Burma" and that there were many Indians and Chinese in the BCP some of whom had

"elected" leaders by the masses. The BCP therefore has demonstrated its amenability to foreign "advice," at least on a policy level, and it would probably accept material assistance with alacrity. However, it is entirely possible that the Communist movement in Burma would be seriously retarded in the event of large-scale and overt foreign intervention in the implementation of policy.

COMMUNIST PARTY (BURMA)

The CPB appears to have degenerated from a fairly formidable organization into numerous uncoordinated anarchist and bandit gangs operating without principles or clearcut objectives. This loss of cohesiveness may be largely due to the long incarceration of its leader, Thankin Soe, and may be rectified somewhat when, and if, he is freed from reported imprisonment by the PDF. In terms of members, popular support and insurrectionary potential the CPB is considerably weaker than the BCP. Although the CPB has been responsible for some of the disturbances in central and southern Burma, it has been most active in the Arakan, which forms the western coastal area of Burma. However, even as regards the Arakan, it is questionable as to how much of the unrest can be attributed to the CPB, to Arakanese separatists, or to both. The CPB's policies, if any actually exist, are at best vague generalizations having much in common with all other Burman political parties. Militarily, the CPB violently opposes the Government, the PVO and the BCP which latter is considered to be opportunistic and compromising. Although the CPB advocates cooperating with the Karens, it appears to have had little, if any, success. So far as is known the CPB does not maintain any foreign contacts. All things considered, the CPB is considered a dangerous organization capable of numerous activities and of prolonging the general unrest in Burma, but not of unseating the Government.

CHINESE COMMUNIST ACTIVITY

Stimulated by postwar developments in China, intensified Communist activity among the estimated 250-300,000 Chinese in Burma, most of whom have close personal and sentimental ties with China, has made considerable headway. Kuomintang influence has drastically declined and its efforts to combat the

spread of Communism have become increasingly weak and ineffectual. The main centers of Chinese Communist activity appear to be Rangoon, Mandalay and along the Yunnan-Burma border. In Rangoon, where the Chinese Communists are said to maintain their headquarters, there are several well-financed party organizers, some of whom recently returned to China presumably for instructions. Of the 50,000 Chinese in Rangoon, there are estimated to be 3,000 party members or active supporters, and most of the remainder are suspected of being at least opportunistically or passively sympathetic to the Chinese Communist movement. Another indication of growing Communist influence among the Chinese is that all Chinese publications in Rangoon, with the exception of the one Kuomintang paper, which has steadily lost circulation, have taken a pro-Communist stand, at least insofar as China is concerned. Limited information indicates that Chinese Communist activity in Upper Burma is directed from Mandalay, but in view of the highly disturbed conditions that have recently obtained in that area this may no longer be the case. Nevertheless, they are apparently still active, and making a particular effort to recruit new adherents among the resident Chinese Nationalist deserters and refugees drifting down from Yunnan. Also, there have been several Chinese incursions along the Sino-Burmese border, some reportedly Communist, which neither the Burmese Government or local leaders have been able adequately to contain.

The Chinese Communists, however, have tried to minimize their overt activities, leaving such to its front organization, the China Democratic League (CDL). CDL publications are completely pro-Communist in orientation, and the CDL is suspected not only of being in contact with Burmese Communists, but also of operating a secret radio in Rangoon and facilitating the infiltration

of Chinese Communists into Burma. Moreover, it reputedly maintains amicable relations with U Ba Swe, the extreme leftist chairman of the Burma Socialist Party (BSP), and may have been partly responsible for the recent Socialist manifesto which praised the Chinese Communist, denounced Anglo-American "imperialism," and claimed that the Socialists were the true adherents of Marxism in Burma. A CDL newspaper also published a statement by Ba Swe in which he reiterated admiration for the Chinese Communists and accused the Anglo-Americans of instigating the long-standing Sino-Burmese border problem and of attempting to make a Tito of Mao Tse-tung.

From the evidence at hand, it is believed that Chinese Communist policy towards Burma is only in the earliest stages of development. The primary objective would seem to be the consolidation of the Chinese population in Burma under firm Communist control and later its use as an effective instrument of Chinese Communist foreign policy. A second objective seems aimed at allaying Burmese fears of Chinese domination and the creation of sympathy for the Chinese movement. The third, and final objective, naturally, is Communist control of Burma, perhaps preferably under the aegis of China. Such objectives may explain the Chinese Communists' avoidance of becoming involved in Burmese affairs and their concentration upon the resident Chinese. At the same time, the Chinese Communists are free to deal with the Burmese Communists, while the "separate and distinct" CDL can approach other political elements, including those supporting the Government, without alienating potential supporters on either side. In this latter respect, it is significant to note that of all the Governments of Southern Asia, the Burmese Government is the only one the Chinese Communists have not denounced.

It therefore appears that the Chinese Communists are attempting to take advantage of the general leftist tendencies of the various Burmese factions and to curry favor wherever the opportunity presents itself in the hope of the emergence, perhaps under Chinese guidance, of a popular front in support of a Government favorably disposed towards a Communist China. It is possible, however, that they are seeking to split the Socialist Party in order to weaken further the present Government to the advantage of the Burmese Communists.

GOVERNMENT COUNTERMEASURES

The Burmese Government is simultaneously attempting to suppress Communism by force and to advance a social and political program designed to undermine the appeal of Communism. These efforts, however, have been largely unsuccessful as the Government has been continually plagued by numerous seemingly insurmountable obstacles, some of which are of its own making.

While CPB has been outlawed, the BCP has not, and no action whatever has been taken against Chinese Communists in Burma. The Government, however, possesses rather extensive legal powers which it has utilized against all real, or imagined, insurgents. Under a Public Order Preservation Order, individuals may be arrested and held without trial indefinitely. The Burmese President has the power (which is exercised only on the Government's advice) to declare martial law anywhere in the country. The President also has the power, under a Constitutional Remedies Suspension Order, to suspend such constitutional provisions as those relating to habeas corpus, writ of mandamus, prohibition and quo warranto. Although the circumstances unquestionably call for stringent measures, the lack of uniformity and irresponsibility that has often marked their application have probably negated much of the salutary effect they otherwise might have had.

Militarily, the Government's armed forces are superior to those of the Communists in terms of manpower and materiel, but are, nevertheless, severely handicapped in a number of respects. The most important is the wide dispersion of these forces throughout the country to fight a variety of insurgents, in addition to the Communists. Government forces have to contend with difficult terrain and unorthodox military tactics without the benefits of efficient transportation and communication systems. Almost all military supplies must be imported, and these are limited by a depleted Treasury. Karen and PVO defections reduced Army and Military Police strength by at least 20%, entailed a considerable loss of materiel and generally lowered the efficiency and effectiveness of Burma's military forces while enhancing the capabilities of anti-Government forces. Burmese military forces suffer from inexperience, and are woefully short of technical, organizational and leadership personnel. Other weaknesses are politics, nepotism, graft and corruption. Many Burmans in the armed forces retain sympathies with the PVO's and Communists which has rendered them unreliable in many instances. In addition, the Government, inspired by the Socialists, has raised an estimated 22,000 police levies to supplement the regular military forces. Although the levies have since been placed under army or military police administration, they are regarded by many observers as a private organ of the Socialist Party. They are poorly trained and ill-disciplined, have not particularly distinguished themselves in the field, and their future effectiveness and loyalty is open to question. Finally, high Burmese military authorities are extremely suspicious of the British Military Mission, whose chief function is to rectify just such deficiencies, and have increasingly disregarded its advice and ignored its offers of assistance. As

a result, Burmese military forces have not been able to suppress the Communists, much less all the other insurgents, and are pressed to maintain control of the towns they garrison and the lines of communication between them.

Politically, the Burmese Government has made several efforts, including the offer of a generous amnesty, to settle the Communist insurrection by negotiation. The Communists, however, never gave indication of accepting.

Basic government policies parallel those advocated by the Communists under a higher standard of living in most respects. The government promises the Burmese people political freedom, economic security, and a socialized welfare state through the redistribution of land, industrialization, state control of the means of production and equitable distribution of surplus wealth. Such a program has undoubtedly stolen thunder from the Communists, especially since it offers the Burmese the same advantages without bloodshed, as well as providing freedom from foreign domination and exploitation. By the same token, the Government is still seeking a rapprochement with the PVO through their common "leftism," in order better to isolate the Communists as well as to reduce overall insurgent strength. However, its inability to usher in a utopia immediately after independence has benefited the Communists who blame the Government for the ills "resulting from connivance with imperialists." Although the Government launched its program with much enthusiasm, the resources and qualified personnel were not available to carry forward successfully such a far-reaching program on such a broad front. Furthermore, good intentions were too often marred by malfeasance in high office. In other cases, hasty and ill-considered action, such as the nationalization of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company, has resulted in additional financial burden. Finally, the Government has been forced to divert more and more of its limited resources to unproductive military expenditures.

Recently, the Burmese Government appears to have become increasingly aware of its inability to promote peace and prosperity through its own efforts. Its policies have noticeably shifted from the extreme left towards the center. It has sought and received military assistance from the Commonwealth, but rejected an offer of short-term financial aid on the grounds that the conditions were too restrictive. It has sponsored legislation designed to attract, rather than discourage, the introduction of foreign capital for the development of mineral resources, and has shown interest in the fourth point of the President's inaugural address. It has concurred in the US suggestion for a common front policy regarding the recognition of a Chinese Communist Government. The Prime Minister has recommended the negotiation of mutually beneficial treaties with nations having "common interests", and most recently the Foreign Minister stated that Burma probably would "consider favorably" any suggestions for a Pacific bloc. Socialist reaction has been one of reluctant acquiescence, and since the Socialists are the Government's chief supporters they could precipitate a serious political crisis at any time. Withdrawal of their support could mean the Government's resignation, a split in the Socialist Party, or both. Although such developments are entirely possible, it seems likely that the parties concerned realize the disastrous consequences that are likely to be the result, and will attempt to avoid them at least temporarily. Furthermore, the Government's changing attitude does not mean that it has abandoned its Marxist coloration, but that it is probably motivated by reasons of self-preservation. Nevertheless, the new trend is an indication that Burmese leaders are at last discovering the real threat to their independence and are turning in the only direction from which assistance is possible in maintaining that

independence and restoring stability in Burma.

CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS

Although a relatively small minority, Burmese Communists are making a violent effort to overthrow the existing regime and establish their own administration over all of Burma. While both Communist parties are effectively serving Soviet foreign policy, the BCP is considerably the stronger and more advanced in ideological sophistication. The BCP has demonstrated its willingness to conform to the international Communist policy and its ability to execute instructions emanating from foreign sources. It will probably continue to do both at least as long as foreign control is relatively well-concealed and local control left largely in the hands of indigenous Communists. Although the BCP's organization is imperfect and there is always the possibility of internal factionalism, it is still capable of prolonged violence and of implementing its more immediate objectives. It will constitute a continuing threat to Burmese stability, but it is unlikely to overthrow the Government in the immediate future through its own efforts. However, it is entirely possible that its capabilities will be enhanced as the Chinese Communists consolidate their control of China. As this occurs, it would seem logical that its orientation will gradually shift away from India towards China.

Meanwhile, although the present Government is anti-Communist and will probably continue its efforts to suppress Communist activities, it is politically and economically weak and unstable. It is forced to dissipate its military strength against a variety of adversaries, and is subject to the fissiparous tendencies of its supporters. Therefore, Communism in Burma will not be suppressed in the predictable future. Such an eventuality will depend largely

upon a much greater clarification of the lines dividing pro-and anti-Communists. To achieve these ends, the government must considerably intensify its efforts to establish itself in the minds of the Burmese as the true advocate of nationalism and of better conditions in Burma while identifying the Communists as the proponents of violence, acting under foreign instructions. In addition, some kind of negotiated settlement will have to be reached with other insurgents and greater confidence and assistance obtained from the various hill people who heretofore have generally been suspicious of the Burmese Government in Rangoon. These efforts must be undertaken by the Burmese themselves, and the prospects for their fulfillment are not especially bright. Paradoxically, the Government is likely to become increasingly dependent upon Western support and assistance, but its willingness and ability to resist Communism may be measured in direct ratio to the encouragement received from this source. Efforts to obtain such aid without exposing itself to charges of subservience to foreign interests will be a delicate procedure. While Western assistance would undoubtedly increase the Burmese Government's ability and willingness to resist Communism, it cannot of itself provide a permanent solution to Burma's problems and restore stability under a non-Communist regime.

All things considered, the Burmese Government's position vis-a-vis the Communists is not hopeless, but the time in which to achieve a decisive position is decidedly limited.